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HOT BREADS FOR COLD DAYS

An interview between Miss Ruth Van Deman, Bureau of Home Economics, and Mr. Wallace Kadderly, Office of Information, broadcast Wednesday, January 31, 1940, in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, by the National Broadcasting Company and a network of 91 associate radio stations.

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WALLACE KADDERLY:

Here we are in Washington. A typical winter day in your nation's Capital - cold, but not too cold....

RUTH VAN DEMAN:

Just cold enough to give you an appetite for some good hot food.

KADDERLY:

Now, Ruth, If that's a signal you're going to ask me to exercise my food imagination again here before lunch.....

VAN DEMAN:

Of course I am. I want to know your favorite hot bread.

KADDERLY:

Hot Bread? Oh me! Do you mean things like hot rolls?

VAN DEMAN:

Um-humm ----- Muffins, pancakes, waffles, pop-overs.....

KADDERLY:

Pop-overs? No. Pop-overs are must so much air as far as I'm concerned.

VAN DEMAN:

A good pop-over is all air, inside.

KADDERLY:

Oh yes, I know. When a cook wants to impress, she makes pop-overs. I understand. Pop-overs have to be mixed and baked just so.

VAN DEMAN:

Especially baked. Pop-overs need a pan that holds the heat iron, or glass, or enamelware. And they need a hot oven for the first half hour about 450 degrees.

KADDERLY:

That's to make them pop, I suppose.

VAN DEMAN:

Right. To create steam inside and expand them like a balloon. Then to cook them through they need a moderate oven for about 15 minutes or more. But, Wallace, if pop-overs leave you cold, what then?

KADDERLY:

Well, time was when I thought pancakes pancakes for Sunday morning breakfast were the perfect food.

(Over)

VAN DEMAN:

Kept score, did you, to see how many you could eat?

KADDERLY:

How you know?

VAN DEMAN:

Well, I know one or two things about boys.

KADDERLY:

Well, I guess I've outgrown the pancake phase.

VAN DEMAN:

So now in your venerable old age.....

KADDERLY:

I vote for hot biscuits.

VAN DEMAN:

What's your idea of a good biscuit?

KADDERLY:

Aren't you the one to set the standards for biscuits?

VAN DEMAN:

I've found that people in different parts of the country have different ideas about biscuits. Some want 'em thin to crusty. Some want 'em high and fluffy.

KADDERLY:

I want 'em light. That is, not heavy when you heft 'em in the hand.

VAN DEMAN:

Light in texture.

KADDERLY:

Yes, but not shot full of holes.

VAN DEMAN:

The expert biscuit makers have a special technique for developing that light texture, a fine tender crumb, they call it.

KADDERLY:

Is it a secret?

VAN DEMAN:

No, Dr. King and Mrs. Freeman put it down in black on white, in the baking bulletin, for any biscuit maker in America to use.

KADDERLY:

I'd like to know the formula now, if it isn't too complicated.

VAN DEMAN:

Of course you have to start with dough that has the proper proportion of fat, to flour, to baking powder, to liquid.

KADDERLY:

And salt. I want salt in my biscuits.

VAN DEMAN:

Glad you feel that way. I want salt in pancakes, and muffins, and any kind of bread, hot or cold.

Well, we'll assume we have a perfectly proportioned and mixed dough here for the roll-out kind of biscuit. Got your bread board ready, lightly dusted with flour to keep the dough from sticking?

KADDERLY: (hesitating)

Yes, yes, I hope you aren't getting me in too deep.

VAN DEMAN:

Didn't you ask for it?

KADDERLY:

Yes, yes. Maybe I'd better roll up my sleeves figuratively speaking.

VAN DEMAN:

Just turn back the cuffs. And of course your hands are clean.

KADDERLY:

Washed 'em just a few minutes ago.

VAN DEMAN:

You're going to knead this dough.

KADDERLY:

Need it?

VAN DEMAN:

K - n - e - a - d.

KADDERLY:

Oh, k - nead. I understand.

VAN DEMAN:

That's the secret of getting that light fluffy biscuit.....

KADDERLY:

..... with a tender crumb.

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, you're going to knead it gently, with that light quick wrist motion, .. just about 15 or 18 strokes.

That develops the gluten some, not too much. If you carry the kneading too far, you'll overdevelop the gluten and force out too much of the gas created by the baking powder. Then you'll get a close-grained, tough little biscuit.

KADDERLY:

Little, I don't want little biscuits. None of those little dabs only about as big as a four-bit piece. I want good-sized, substantial biscuits.

VAN DEMAN:

All right, pat that dough down to a sheet about three-fourths of an inch thick.

KADDERLY:

Can't I use a rolling pin?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, certainly, just so you don't get belligerent with it. And you can use just as big a cutter as you like.

KADDERLY:

In camp I used to take a tin cup.

VAN DEMAN:

I thought all along you probably knew a lot about making biscuits.

KADDERLY:

I've stirred up a few things....at camp. But I'm no scientific cook.

VAN DEMAN:

Some of the best biscuit makers aren't either. They just go by instinct, and the feel of the dough. And, you know, biscuits need a good hot oven to help them rise an oven about 450 degrees, for 15 minutes or so.

KADDERLY:

And doesn't the kind of flour make some difference too?

VAN DEMAN:

Decidedly. A soft-wheat flour acts differently from a hard-wheat with more gluten. And then there are the blended, "general purpose" flours.

And of course there are all kinds of ways of varying the flavor of biscuits.

KADDERLY:

Plain ones, with butter and honey are good enough for me.

VAN DEMAN:

Maybe you never tasted peanut butter biscuit?

KADDERLY:

Peanut butter spread on top?

VAN DEMAN:

No mixed right in, in place of some of the other fat.

KADDERLY:

Sounds interesting.

VAN DEMAN:

They taste good. And I like cheese biscuit grated cheese mixed in the dough. Or grated orange rind. Orange-flavored biscuits are very good on a special occasion when you want something "just a little different."

KADDERLY:

Those suggestions in your baking bulletin too?

VAN DEMAN:

Yes, those and lots more. We've hardly more than skimmed the surface of hot breads for cold days.

KADDERLY:

I'm sure of that.

VAN DEMAN:

And I expect there are some of our Farm and Home friends who don't have a copy of the baking bulletin for ready reference.

KADDERLY:

Well, Farm and Home friends, we stand ready to send you this "ready reference" if you want a copy. The full title is "Homemade Bread, Cake, and Pastry" and it contains a lot about the principles of mixing and baking as well as recipes to illustrate the principles.

Again, this bulletin on home baking is free. All you need to do is drop a card to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., and ask for the home baking bulletin.

VAN DEMAN:

And now, Wallace, you're free to turn down your cuffs and forget about biscuit making.

KADDERLY:

No, I'm still thinking about hot biscuits and honey, but (ad lib)

